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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on changes in students' study habits and attitudes during the Prep Program at Shippensburg State College. Fifty students, 40 black and ten white, were selected for the program for high-risk minority group students, and granted admission to Shippensburg for the Fall of 1970. The Prep students spent six weeks on the Shippensburg State College campus, attending special classes in English, speech, humanities, science, and mathematics. In addition to the director of the Program, his assistant, and the instructional staff, 10 undergraduate "tutor-counselors" were available to help Prep students with their personal, social, and academic adjustment to college life. In order to evaluate changes in study habits and attitudes, the Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes was administered to the Prep students at the beginning and at the end of the six week Prep program. The Prep students tended to report more negatively on their study habits and attitudes at the end of the Program. This seems to indicate that the Program did not attain its goal, but it is possible that the negative change in scores does not represent an actual decline in study habits and attitudes but a more realistic self-report. (Author/JM)

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CHANGES IN STUDY HABITS AND ATTITUDES DURING A COLLEGE PREPARATORY PROGRAM FOR HIGH RISK STUDENTS[1]

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[1]Presented at the 1971 National Convention of APGA in Atlantic City, N.J.

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INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of special programs intended to help high-risk, minority group students succeed in college. Despite the proliferation of these special college preparatory programs, there has been relatively little empirical research on the effects of such programs. Since participation in these programs is usually a preclude to regular college enrollment, it is important to determine what actually happens to participating students. Systematic study of special college preparatory programs should serve three functions: determine if the objectives of the program have been attained, suggest ways of improving the program, and provide information about the characteristics of participating students. The subject of this paper, a report on changes in students' study habits and attitudes during the Prep Program at Shippensburg State College, is an attempt to fulfill the functions of program evaluation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREP PROGRAM

In the summer of 1970, Shippensburg State College inaugurated the Prep Program, a college preparatory program for high-risk, minority group students. Fifty students, forty black and ten white, were selected for the Program and granted admission to Shippensburg for the fall of 1970. The Prep students were a heterogenous group, regarding race, sex, and socio-economic background, but all were considered high-risk regarding their chances for academic success at Shippensburg. The Prep students spent six weeks on the Shippensburg State College campus, attending special classes in English, speech, humanities, science, and mathematics. In addition to the director of the Program, his assistant, and the instructional staff, ten undergraduate "tutor-counselors" were available to help Prep students with their personal, social, and academic adjustment to college life.

COLLECTION OF THE DATA

The Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (SSHA) was used to measure study habits and attitudes. The SSHA is a self-report inventory, consisting of 100 items about study methods, motivation for study, and attitudes toward academic activities. The SSHA is particularly suited for an investigation of the study habits and attitudes of high-risk, minority group students for two reasons. First, it measures traits that are related to academic performance as measured by grade point average but are essentially independent of scholastic aptitude as measured by standard aptitude tests. Second, it measures motivation for and attitudes toward academic work, rather than the mechanics of studying. While attitudinal variables are important in the academic performance of all students, they assume particular importance in the performance of high-risk, minority group students. The SSHA was administered to the Prep students at the beginning and at the end of the six week Prep Program.

Since there was no population of students at Shippensburg comparable to the Prep students, it was not possible to select a control group for this study. While not intended as a control, a group of fifty regularly admitted Shippensburg Students were randomly selected from the 1970-71 entering class. These students were given the SSHA once during their first term on campus and served as a comparison group(Comp group).

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The data for this study was in the form of numerical scores on the seven scales of the SSHA--Delay Avoidance(DA), Work Methods(WM), Study Habits(SH), Teacher Approval(TA), Education Acceptance(EA), Study Attitudes(SA), and Study Orientation(SO). All tests for differences between scores--pre- and

post-test, Prep and Comp group--were made using the t-test. There were significant differences (.05 level) between the Prep students' pre- and post-test scores on all seven scales of the SSHA (Table 1). These changes were all in a negative direction; scores at the beginning of the Program were significantly higher than they were at the end.

Insert Table 1

There were significant differences (.05 level) between the Prep group pre-test scores and Comp group scores on four of the seven SSHA scales--Work Methods, Teacher Approval, Study Attitudes, and Study Orientation. (Table 2). At the beginning of the Program, Prep students' scores on these scales were significantly higher than the scores of the Comp group students.

Insert Table 2

When the Prep students' post-test scores were compared with the Comp group scores, the differences between the two groups on the WM, TA, SA, and SO scales disappeared. At the end of the Prep Program, there were no significant differences between the Prep group and the Comp group in their report of study habits and attitudes.

For a further analysis of the data, the Prep students were divided into subgroups by sex. The male Prep students' scores at the beginning and at the end of the Program were compared, using the t-test, as were the pre- and post-test scores of the female Prep students. The result for the male students indicated significant changes (.05 level) on all the scales of the SSHA (Table 3). Scores for the males were significantly higher at the beginning of the Program

than they were at the end.

Insert Table 3

The results of the t-test for the female students' scores revealed no significant changes. The female students' report of their study habits and attitudes was essentially unchanged from the beginning to the end of the Program. Considering the absence of significant changes in the female students' scores from pre- to post-test, it seems that the significant score changes for the Prep group as a whole during the Program were attributable to the male students. Subgroup comparisons based on race and socio-economic background were also planned, but these subgroupings resulted in populations too small to allow for meaningful comparisons.

DISCUSSION

The Prep students' more negative report of their study habits and attitudes at the end of the Program seems to indicate that the Program did not attain its goal, but it is possible that the negative change in scores does not represent an actual decline in study habits and attitudes but a more realistic self-report. At the beginning of the Program, the Prep students' scores on the SSHA may have been elevated by their enthusiasm for the special educational program in which they were participating. It is also possible that at the beginning of the Program, the Prep students were anxious about their status as high-risk students and needed to present themselves as capable, committed students. After a six week exposure to the demands of college level work, the Prep students may have given a more realistic, if somewhat deflated, report of their study habits and attitudes. Contributing to the differences between the Prep students' pre- and post-test scores may have been a more sober, if

not disenchanted, response to the realities of life at a predominantly white, middle-class college in a rural area. The fact that the Prep students were more like the Comp group in their report of study habits and attitudes at the end of the Program may indicate that the Prep students had adopted their classmates more realistic, if somewhat more sober, perception of the academic side of college life.

If the Prep students are giving a more realistic self-report at the end of the Program, this information should be used to develop a plan for improving deficiencies in study habits and attitudes. Since the SSHA was specifically designed for counseling students with academic problems, responses to the SSHA can be used to isolate areas of study skills difficulty. While the decline in post-test scores may indicate a more realistic self-report on the part of the Prep students, it may also reflect negative qualities in the Program itself. Some procedure--questionnaire or interview--may be useful in locating problem areas within the Program and could lead to changes which would preserve the level of enthusiasm students display upon entering the Program.

Table 1

Test of the Significance between Prep Group Pre-and Post-Test Means

SSHA Subscales	N	Means		t Scores	p Values
		Pre	Post		
Delay Avoidance	44	23.43	19.00	-2.43	.017*
Work Methods	44	25.16	20.00	-2.93	.004**
Study Habits	44	48.59	38.98	-3.00	.003**
Teacher Approval	44	28.91	23.50	-3.29	.001**
Education Acceptance	44	27.36	23.39	-2.64	.010**
Study Attitudes	44	56.27	46.89	-3.21	.002**
Study Orientation	44	104.64	85.80	-3.42	.001**

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table 2

Test of the Signif cance between Prep Group Pre-Test Means and Comparison Group Means.

SSHA Subscales	N		Means		t Scores	p Values
	Prep	Comp	Prep	Comp		
Delay Avoidance	44	44	23.43	21.86	-0.84	.405
Work Methods	44	44	25.16	21.64	-2.04	.044*
Study Habits	44	44	48.59	43.50	-1.62	.109
Teacher Approval	44	44	28.91	24.89	-2.37	.020*
Education Acceptance	44	44	27.36	25.43	-1.36	.179
Study Attitudes	44	44	56.27	50.32	-2.06	.043*
Study Orientation	44	44	104.64	93.82	-2.05	.043*

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 3

Test of the Significance between Pre-and Post-Test Means for Male Prep Students

SSHA Subscales	N	Means		t Scores	p Values
		Pre	Post		
Delay Avoidance	29	24.34	18.45	-2.60	.012*
Work Methods	29	25.00	19.38	-2.55	.014*
Study Habits	29	49.34	37.79	-2.81	.007**
Teacher Approval	29	30.31	24.45	-2.94	.005**
Education Acceptance	29	28.00	23.24	-2.50	.015*
Study Attitudes	29	58.31	47.69	-2.89	.005**
Study Orientation	29	107.31	85.38	-3.15	.003**

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

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